(c) the action proposed by his Ministry to have the investigations expedited and the offenders booked under the law so as to discourage such scandals in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN) : (a) A company namely M/s World Callnet Pvt. Ltd., F-67, Green Park, New Delhi is involved in the case registered at Police Station, Special Cell, Lodhi Colony, New Delhi *vide* FIR No. 53/02 dated 12-9-2002.

(b) and (c) Investigation in the case has been completed by the Police. 4 persons namely S/Shri Surya Prakash, O.P. Nimani, Rajesh Malhotra and Amar Chaudhary have been arrested. The case has since been challaned on 8-4-2003 and is set to be filed by the Police in the Court for judicial verdict.

Use of particular brand of software

4981. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Government specify the use of only a particular brand of software for all Government tenders in this sector;

(b) if so, the reasons for showing clear preference for only one type of software;

(c) to what extent Government have encouraged competition to get the best deal for the country;

(d) the steps being taken to avoid favouring only one type of software producer; and

(e) the details of the steps to encourage different types of software in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) to (e) Choice of packaged software and development platform is made by the users and/or software developers keeping in view a number of factors including cost, features, availability of development tools, ease of maintenance, availability of service support etc. Given this context, Government has not been favouring any type of software product.

Recently, world-over Free/Open Source Software has been emerging as a complement to proprietary software and to promote interoperability and offering many benefits to users and developers. Accordingly, Government is initiating Linux India Initiative based on deliberations with various stake-holders including users. This will, among other things, address some of these concerns.

Propagation of Linux system

4982. SHRI S. M. LALJAN BASHA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government held a meeting with 70 people from the industry to discuss the propagation of Linux system;

(b) if so, the objectives of this meeting;

(c) the conclusions arrived at in the meeting; and

(d) the follow up steps being taken by Government after this meeting?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The objective of the meeting was to discuss the relevance and opportunities for Free/Open Source Software (OSS), more specially GNU/Linux in the Indian context. Specific steps such as setting up of Resource Centre(s), Special Interest Groups, suitable provision in procurement policy of Government/ Government Institutions, localisation, R & D, inclusion of these in the Curricula/ Labs of educational institutions specially Engineering Colleges etc. and to arrive at consensual action plan.

(c) and (d) Based on the deliberations of the meeting and follow-up inputs from participants, a proposal for Linux India Initiative was submitted to Planning Commission for budgetary support during 2003-2004 and was submitted as part of DIT's Annual Plan for 2003-2004. The Department of Information Technology (DIT) maintains a stance of strict technology neutrality, platform neutrality and vendor neutrality. It has therefore not prescribed preferential treatment of one over the other. DIT believes that both proprietary and open source software have a large space in the marketplace and the choice must be exercised by each user.